

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Longing for More – 4-10 September 2021

Christ would have us take lessons from the inspired history. Says Paul, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Corinthians 10:6). The children of Israel in the wilderness were given bread from heaven. It was certainly a perfect food, and coming from God it must have been good in every sense, pleasant to both sight and taste; yet most of them became disgusted with it and loathed it. Not relishing it, they undoubtedly found difficulty in digesting it, as they longed for the diet of their captivity. “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). God gave them their heart’s desire, but with it, as the natural and inevitable accompaniment, He sent leanness, or literally rendered, disease, into their souls. “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” They fell in the wilderness, and we ought to learn the lesson that the food which God has not specifically appointed for us, cannot build us up in the long run, even though our perverted appetites may cause us to be temporarily benefited. None of God’s provisions are arbitrary. He who made us knows our frame; and the food which He appointed in the beginning is the only food that is perfectly adapted to human constitution. Wisdom says: “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:36). And the result has always demonstrated the truth of the words.

Sunday: Baptized Into Moses – The Lesson asks, ‘What spiritual lessons can we learn from their “examples,” both the good and the bad that they left us?’ When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, to fulfil to them the promise made to Abraham, He gave them the purest food possible-bread direct from heaven. Is it not consistent that when He sets His hand the second time to deliver His people, He will expect them to come as nearly as possible to the same style of living? In those days the people tempted God, by asking meat for their lust, and as a consequence they were destroyed. “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” The bread which they had was from heaven, given not by Moses, but by God. It was daily bread, for the nourishment of their bodies, and was their living for forty years. Yet it was “spiritual meat.” It was by giving them this bread that God undertook to teach them that man doth not live by bread only, but by the Word of God. Therefore we see that in eating of it they were eating the Word of God. By the giving of the manna, God would have us learn that in the daily bread which He gives us, He is giving us Himself. Christ is the living bread that came down from heaven, and it was upon His body that the children of Israel were fed; in refusing that food, they were rejecting Christ. But they did not discern the Lord’s body, and so, although the food which they had was the very best that could be given them, they died. They ate and drank condemnation to themselves. Men may do this, we learn from the eleventh chapter of first Corinthians, even while eating the body of Christ. And yet, if we do not eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, we have no life in us (John 6:53). Only the perfect body and blood of Christ can give life, but that life must be received in faith, else even it will be of no avail.

Monday: Ritual and Sacrifices – When the Jews at Sinai volunteered to work God’s works for Him, they undertook their own salvation. They ignored the history of Abraham, and God’s covenant with him, to which their attention had been specially called. But God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and so, in harmony with His covenant with Abraham, He did not cast off the people, but instead He endeavoured to teach them of Himself and His salvation, even out of their unbelief. He gave them a system of sacrifices and offerings, and a daily and yearly round of ceremonies that were exactly in keeping with the law which they had elected to keep, namely, the law of works. Of course this sacrificial system could not save them any more than could the broken law of works out of which it grew. Any man who had understanding enough to know the nature of sin and the necessity for atonement, had sense enough to know that pardon and righteousness could never be obtained by the ceremonies connected with the tabernacle. The very offering of a sacrifice indicated that death is the wages and fruit of sin. But anyone could see that the life of a lamb, a goat, or a bullock, was not worth as much as a man’s own life. None of those animals, nor all of them together, could answer for the life of a single

man. Thousands of rams, or even a human sacrifice, could not atone for a single sin (Micah 6:6-7). The faithful among the people understood this well. David said, after he had committed a great sin, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psalm 51:16). And God, through the prophets, taught the people: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" "I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats" (Isaiah 1:11). "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me" (Jeremiah 6:20). There was no virtue in them, for the law had only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," and could "never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Hebrews 10:1). It would of course have been better, nay, the very best thing, if the people of Israel had preserved the simple and strong faith of Abraham, in which case they would have had no tabernacle but the one "which the Lord pitched, and not man" (verse 2); no High Priest except Christ Himself, "made an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (verse 1); no limit to the priesthood, but every one of them a priest "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5); no law but "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ" (Romans 8:2); in short, only the reality, and not the mere shadow. But since the people did not believe, it was a wonderful exhibition of God's kindness and love and forbearance, that He gave them what must have served as a continual object lesson. The very "weakness and unprofitableness" (Hebrews 7:18) of the law of works was always apparent to every thoughtful person; and when the soul became awakened, that law whose only profit was conviction, and whose only power was death, directed them to Christ, to whom it shut them up for freedom and life. It made evident to them that in Christ, and in Him alone, they could find salvation. The truth as it is in Jesus, is the truth that sanctifies.

Tuesday: The "Example" of Rest – The Israelites failed to enter into the Sabbath, to rest in the works of God. Many today do not enter the rest of the Sabbath, for they attempt to keep the Sabbath through their own works. The fact that "they could not enter in because of unbelief," shows that they would have entered in if they had believed; and the fact that perfect rest was all ready for them, is still further shown by the statement, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3). When works are finished, rest must ensue; accordingly we read that "God did rest the seventh day from all His works" (verse 4). That is what God said in one place of the seventh day; but in another place He said, "They shall not enter into My rest" (verse 5). We see, therefore, that the rest which was ready, and which the children of Israel did not enter into because of unbelief, was the rest connected with the seventh day. For it was God's rest that was offered them, and it was His rest that they failed to secure, and the seventh day is the Sabbath – rest of the Lord. The Sabbath is the only rest of which we read in connection with God – God rested on the seventh day from all His work – and that rest was ready as soon as the work of creation was completed.

Wednesday: "Harden Not Your Hearts" – God had promised rest to the Israelites, but they rebelled against Him, and "so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Does He set another day? "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief; again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (4:6-7). That other day is *to-day*. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Thursday: Conquering a Heavenly City – Let us strive to gain victory over sin. 'But,' you say, 'I am too great a sinner; I have tried and failed so many times.' That is not to the point. Christ died to save sinners. All the promises in the Bible are for the sinners. All that is asked of you is to strive to sin no more, implicitly accepting the strength which Christ is able and anxious to bestow. 'Cannot overcome! The path too narrow! The natural inclinations too strong!' How do you know this? You have not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4). You have not fully tested the matter. You have no right to say that you cannot overcome until you have put forth as great efforts as did the Saviour – to resist your own will and let His will be done in you; and if you thus resist you cannot fail, for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).